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## Press Release:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### JUDICIARY JOINS JAMES IN FIGHTING AUTO THEFT

Car theft in Newark and Essex County has reached epidemic proportions. "We are at a crisis and the community and police are frustrated and outraged," Mayor Sharpe James told Essex County Assignment Judge Burrell Ives Humphreys today.

James and City Council President Donald Bradley met with Humphreys, Acting Essex County Prosecutor James Mulvihill and their staffs in the judge's chamber where he called for a "full private/public partnership against auto thefts" and urged stronger judicial action against repeat offenders.

The Mayor presented a 12-point program offering short and long term solutions to auto theft, which includes proposals such as upgrading the crime from a misdemeanor to grand larceny, mandatory sentencing for repeat offenders, community service as punishment, loss of driving privileges for five years beyond the legal driving age, parental liability and family counseling.

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AUTO THEFT AD 1

His proposal also calls for a school curriculum to include the ills of auto theft, a boot camp for offenders, and a mandatory state anti-auto theft bill that would require factory installation of devices.

Humphreys agreed to cooperate "100 percent," calling the Mayor's plan "a good program."

He asked Mulvihill to provide him with a proposal for dealing with chronic offenders within two days and said he would assign one or two more judges to process these cases. The judge also noted that he immediately would transfer five additional probation officers from the adult division to the juvenile section to supplement the five who were previously assigned.

The Mayor pointed out that police reports show that 456 persons were arrested for car theft so far this year and expressed dismay that few were incarcerated as punishment for their crimes. Many of the offenders are under age 18.

Judge Phillip Friedman, presiding judge of the Family Division, noted that fewer than 20 percent of the young car thieves are responsible for more than half of the crimes and said that there are only 600 beds in New Jersey correctional institutions for juveniles. .

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AUTO THEFT AD 2

James interjected, "If kids who are stealing cars believe nothing will happen to them, they will continue these acts jeopardizing their lives, the lives of police officers and innocent pedestrians and motorists." He then ticked off a list of bystanders and drivers who have been killed by stolen cars.

"We must start sending a real message. The public is fed up. If these youths cannot be locked up because of lack of space, they should be placed under house arrest, if they have a license it should be revoked, or they should be prevented from getting one once they reach the required age," he suggested.

Bradley agreed, "Young people are laughing at the system. They think they can get away with anything. If they do the crime, they have to do time. Give them jail, put them under house arrest or require community service. We cannot wait any longer, as we are losing our city."

Young car thieves are taking over the neighborhoods, said Mulvihill. He called for a "chronic offender" program that would send the youthful offenders to Jamesburg, the state penitentiary for young people.

At the same time, Mulvihill complimented Newark for its strict rules prohibiting car chases, and said he would meet with the police chiefs of other Essex municipalities to discourage these procedures. They (chases) put police in danger, also the thief and innocent victims."

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AUTO THEFT AD 3

Humphreys noted, "I am satisfied that there is room for improvement within the juvenile justice system in all areas, but we are bound to work within existing statutes."

The Mayor replied he would contact Newark's state representatives to introduce legislation changing the criminal statutes so that the youngsters could be dealt with more harshly.

At the same time, Humphreys pointed out that the Essex prosecutor uses the waiver more than any other county in New Jersey, which allows perpetrators over 14 to be treated as adults.

In the meantime, James agreed to assist the judiciary in placing those sentenced to community service in Newark's municipal community service program. He also offered to help obtain televisions to be placed outside the courtrooms, which would show the accidents, deaths and injuries that result from stolen cars.